# POETRY QUARTERLY

## AUTUMN - 1941

*In this issue :*

THE LAST REFUGE

A Masque (conclusion) by Wrey Gardiner

NEW POEMS

by Roy McFadden, Ian Serraillier
Peter Baker, Robert Greacen
Bertram Warr, E. Curt Peters
Eric Nixon, W. Barrington Pink
and others

REVIEWS

by Alex Comfort and Samuel J. Looker

*Edited by Wrey Gardiner*

THE GREY WALLS PRESS
BILLERICAY ESSEX
ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE

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Book of the Quarter :—

"THE WHITE HORSEMAN," Prose and Verse of the New Apocalypse, edited by J. F. HENDRY and HENRY TREECE. Routledge 7/6

Every Quarter "Poetry Quarterly" will recommend to its readers the best book of verse received during the quarter.

# POETRY QUARTERLY

*Edited by Wrey Gardiner*
*at the*
GREY WALLS PRESS, BILLERICAY, ESSEX,
*to whom all correspondence, MSS., etc. should be addressed.*
*Subscription Rates :— 6/6 per annum, including postage or 1/7½ per single copy.*

Vol. III. Autumn, 1941 No. 3

## *EDITORIAL*

AS the fate of the world is being decided by the greatest masses of armed men ever brought together in one conflict it is not very strange that the birth of a new school of poetry should have aroused less notice than it deserves. In another place we have noticed the anthology in which these poets set out their claim to the attention of that lamentably small public for whom poetry is the bread of life. POETRY QUARTERLY has made it the Book of the Quarter not because we think our faithful subscribers will necessarily appreciate its point of view, or agree with our reviewer's eulogy, but because we do believe that it is important in these days of distress that it is still possible for man to carry on the disinterested activities of the mind and we are proud to think that war scarred London is today the home of poets who can lead a vital movement in the world of thought. We are glad, too, that a contributor to our pages, Nicholas Moore, a poet for whom we predict a brilliant future, is well represented in its pages.

The interest shown by various groups of writers in the verse play is surely a healthy sign of the revivification of English letters that some hope is about to take place. If the neo-romanticism of the Apocalypticists marks the birth of as fruitful a period as the Elizabethan, or that great epoch which was ushered in by the publication of Lyrical Ballads in 1798 who will complain ?

Readers of this magazine for the past year will be interested in the appearance of the first Grey Walls Anthology of verse from its pages THIS LIVING STONE and we hope they will feel that it is no unworthy justification of the activities of the Press. And perhaps in ONE PLUM MORE they will discover hitherto unknown poems that will surprise and charm with their great beauty and felicity of diction, and remind us that in the old poetry there is still much pleasure and delight.

## THE LAST REFUGE.

These lines we give below form the conclusion of a Masque in verse THE LAST REFUGE by Wrey Gardiner which will be published by The Grey Walls Press at a later date. The scene is the hall of an old country house which has been abandoned by its owners who have evacuated themselves to another part of the country. Four people are seated round a common table set in the middle of the floor and covered with the remains of a meal, an OLD WOMAN and CINDERELLA who were formerly employed in the house, and two men who have come there for various reasons only that day, the ANARCHIST and the POET. The LUNATIC appears on the staircase running round the back of the stage. He is the son of the owners of the house and for some time past has refused to leave his bedroom.

. . . . Give us a song now

*Cinderella:*

What good are poets who don't sing

*Poet:*

In the dark of the ages
My words will fall softly
Like tears in the silence
Of the end of the world.

As stars fill time's spaces
Old men in corners
Will know my disasters
And hear this my song.

I sway like one swinging on a gibbet in the wind
Oh! my fantastic and fearless seer.
Freedom shall be steeled like whipcord in the ashes of our desires,
I have grown up slowly with the derelict years.

Sinister Susan sewing shrouds for soldiers
Sat at the graveside of an old world's hopes.
Her little son with eyes of dawn still played alone
Happy and undefeated in the dull backyard.

Indefinite the dream, the seam in the old coat now outworn
But sheltering the cold, the old in the rain pushing
Forward from all the ash cold rooms, those tombs
Where we shall starving live and singing die.

(A violent knocking at the door)

*Old Woman:* (Rising)

They have come to take us away
Only the dead know freedom, or the mad.
You with your drunken songs still know the time.

*Cinderella:*

I daren't go down the passage in the dark
I was frightened when I was a little girl.
Oh! Poet sing to me of roses and the dew on
strawberry leaves
Remember our loving in the sun
Between the apple trees.

(Violent knocking)

*Old Woman:*

There's no shadow frightens me,
Devils and fools and beasts, men are
And there's the last cold grip of death,
But I'm old and tired and somehow like a feather,
Careless of a mad world's winds.
(Exit slowly)

(Rest sit round table in stiff poses listening. Noise of bolts withdrawn, then feet shuffling. INSPECTOR pushes past OLD WOMAN and enters.)

*Inspector:*

Who is the owner of this house,
Somebody must be the owner,
I must know his name and identity.

*Old Woman:*

They have gone away, we don't know where they are,
No money, no instructions—

*Anarchist:*

And without money there can be no instructions
We who sit here and drink are the owners now,
We are alive, not vague names and dead powers,
We are real and in possession.

*Inspector:* (Reading and shuffling papers)

I must have the owner's signature
To this document. Under the Act

*Poet:* (Interrupting)

Act of God was once a phrase
In the old time-stained documents of the past
For the deluge and the lightning that struck the roof
Of an unlucky house.
It seems that the gentlemen who would control our
lives
From their offices have now decided to disturb our
And break into a world they cannot know,
The world of the unusual and the strange.
peace

*Inspector:*

And I am empowered by the Office of Anti-political Offences
To summon all those found in delapidated buildings,
Unlicensed by The Central Council of Obligatory Dwellings
In accordance with Sub-Section 4B of the Act hereinbefore mentioned
To appear before the Committee
To answer to the charge of living dangerously.

*Cinderella:* (To Poet)

But you will take me away—far away
And we will live in a little house of our own
Between the apple trees and the sea.

*Poet:* (Taking Cinderella's hand)

I can only give you dreams
And the desire
For a new kingdom in the moon
And hope of another time,
Make you see old memories clear
In the ashes of the fire.

*Old Woman:*

They want to take us away
From these old stones
Our comfortable refuge
The last resting place
For these poor worn bones.

(Her voice rises) There is One above—

*Lunatic:* (Looking over staircase above)

Who calls cackling down the drains of destiny,
Dusting the cobwebs from the dark corners of time?
What little hour has fallen like a net
Upon these unquiet and immature beings
Struggling in the ways of the uneasy.
Look at them posturing and gesticulating
Like the unthinking automata they are.
They know no design, no intricate plan,
I alone have found the path of stone
Between the gargoyles and the sand.

(*Inspector* looks up)

*Anarchist:* (Taking poker from fireplace strikes *Inspector* who falls)

Freedom with all thy faults I love thee still,
Fearless I can never be a slave,

My life is mine and if I destroy
I will build again,
If I die there is a light
Will not go out
But with the life of all mankind,
For freedom is the living movement of men
And regimentation a cancer ends in death.

*Lunatic:* (Still from above)

There is a light will never fade within my skull,
A tapestried day dream of shade and shallow
I have found the little narrow garden door,
The strait way that leads like a dream
From the dull interminable desert outside the walls
Of my citadel. They cannot see the colour and the texture
Of my world where the tawny lions come and go
And the soft furred tigers striding through the night
Echo the magic of a million twisted trees.
All you poor crackbrained fools who disdain desire
Are but the slaves of a crawling cesspool
Some call sanity. I have my latch key
To the dragoned silk of China's past,
To slaughters more bloody and fantastic
Than any your little polished box describes
In cultured voices. Hell knows no fires I have not seen
With the inner eye of my despair,
And I have seen a flower that floats on cool green pools
In the sad silence of eternity more rare
Than the dead poets of a thousand years
In all their coloured dreams have ever known.

*Anarchist:* (Very low)

Liberty, my goddess that I have followed through all blood and tears
You take strange paths in the tortured mind of man.

*Poet:* Truth is still stranger than we know
Like light falling in a chaotic dream
In the twisted corridors suddenly upon the wall
Haunting the mad, the suffering, the chosen few.

*Cinderella:*

Love is a woman's tear will always fall
Sure as the gentle rain upon us all.

CURTAIN

## *Plumed Hope*

The sun rises, a requiem
upon the shorn corn.
Before it night retreats as
a humble woman with secrets
to hide. Under her dark cloak
peer the shamed tears, the flesh weary
loves. Now the sun is beating
the sky with burning fingers,
the earth is a mad lilt,
sudden ecstasy. The furred
creatures find hollows, like weary
soldiers the flowers revive
obedient to their trumpeter
sun. Here is promise, plumed hope.

A. E. EDWARDS.

## *Early Winter on a Farm near Baiae*
### (*after Martial*)

So crammed the corn tumbles from chink and crevice,
jars steam the odour of old wine.
Now is November: running from winter
all haste the farmer steals the last grape. Downvalley
the base echo of bull lowing, where his calf
on baby legs swaggers for fight.
Fowl tread the muckyard,
speckled guinea-hens, flamingoes winged with fire,
pheasants flown from lands of sorcery.
A squawking gander splashes gems the peacock wears.

Listen! the woodbird calls, now the dove,
and towers ring to feather sounds. Suddenly
spying the farmwife, hogs with greedy gallop snort
to her apron. One lamb lonely, mother-longing,
bleats for her, peeps ever to her pasture.

IAN L. SERRAILLIER.

## *Evening on Trag na dTreannach*

Culina, the heavy-handed, slew his son,
And gave a name of music to a yellow strand,
For the salt-lipped waves to chant,
For the white birds' crooning.

Now, the timeless wheel has spun out other histories,
And I stand transient, grasping the minute's peace
With the filtering sand-dust, quiet from the white
man's ways
And the white man's bombings.

But his spirit haunts the waves with white ghost-blood,
Insisting the querulous question loud
And peremptory. The violet hill-line is a shroud
For tears to dwell in; in his hair lurks the yellow
seaweed.

Evening on Tragh na dTreannach moves
Softly, whimpering into a purple moan of doves.

ROY McFADDEN.

## *Lost at Sea*

The sea desired him,
and the treadmill of his life
was choked with sand and the fins of fishes:
with the fins of fishes and bright, gold sand.
The seashore spewed him,
and the evening took him in a shroud of shadows.
There is no laughter in his eyes, but sea bed pearls
like the tears of girls,
and his hair streams out with the wind of the sea,
and his youthful spirit is free.
The beat of the tide and the cry of the gulls
are his last mass and sacrament:
and between the sockets of his eyes, water,
and where his hot heart was, water.
The sea was lonely for friendship,
as I am now for his love.

ERIC WRIGHT.

## *Sea Speech*

Out of the darkness the sea speaks,
Out of the sea come the voices,
The myriad sibilant voices
Of things of the sea, of the creatures
Who silent, slide swift in the greenness
Where light has turned liquid towards darkness.
Though mute, these find voice in the breakers.
The whale that is dumb roars in thunder
Of pounding, clear-curving green water
That, broken, gives birth to the thin speech
Of fish, so that hissing sea voices
Rise bubbling and cold from the smother
Of white boiling foam. But the hushing,
The dry brittle noise as the thin slide
Of water, turned brown by the sand floor,
Lips soft at the earth and runs backward
Is made by no voice of a live thing.
Here, softly speak bones of the drowned men
That knock now most gently together
Hushed long to sleep by the sea.

M. C. WATSON.

## *Sere Solitude*

Lovely eyes
asleep deep waters move
nor care nor yet beware
the grave dug deep
nor know where whited bones
their tryst do keep;

and
lovely lips
awake break autumn flowers
yet space not frame the time
nor hasten eastward
as the hedgehogs creep
beneath the hedge.

ERIC NIXON.

## *The Bell-buoy*

The toll of a bell
Slow, sad and far away,
A lonely bell,
Lapped by the waves all day.
It tells, it tells
Of gray, incessant tides
And cockle-shells.
And patiently it rides
From trough to crest, and slides
To trough again.
How mournfully it chides
For a moment. Then
The wind moans, and the waves
Creep up the beach
And fill the sandy graves,
Left in their reach,
Since the last tide, by spades
And coloured pails
Of boys and nursery-maids.
The seaweed trails
In long green tongues
That drift
On with the knell
The tides ring when
They lift
The clanging bell.
It tells a tale
Of whelks and winkle-shells,
October gale,
And long Atlantic swells.
The toll of a bell
Slow, sad and far away,
A lonely bell,
Lapped by the waves all day.

JAMES COLDWELL.

## *Evening*

The sun is gone
and the voice of the day
is lost among the whispering pines:

Overhead
the white shadows of the last birds
wing homeward to their nests,
and the breath of the labouring wind
sinks down to sigh no more.

O my heart,
with all things at rest,
it seems, we are the solitary wayfarers
on the road:

Here, at the door
of this dwelling-house called "Sleep"
we will knock for hospitality,
and humbly request a pillow for our dreams.

SURREY WILMOT.

## *Wild Night*

Oh, the wet, wild weather,
And the riving wind,
And the torn, moon-bordered cloud
And the strike of leather
Where we stride together
By the groaning trees, storm-bowed.

But the wet, wild weather
And the riving wind,
And the sword of sudden rain,
With the firelight gleam
On the smoke-dark beam,
And the lamplight gold on the pane.

ETHEL WALTER.

## *Light*

Spring light slants rain through.
Walking at night
Unquiet
Dark rising against us out of the darkness
We fumble, feeling with feet,
Fend off dark's slur,
Stare. Until now
Grey light slants day through
Rain light steals waylong.
Awake the song
Newcomers
True for you the first light, birthlight of year's
eyes
And the surprise. We alone
Fend off dark's fear
Peer far for something near
That we have known—
Or thinking that we knew—
But spring light starts rain through.

SYDNEY D. TREMAYNE.

## *Homage to Edward Thomas*

*(on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death)*

Down England's wooded ways it was his lone delight
To wander solace seeking under wind-loud trees,
To follow lover-like elusive melodies
Unheard by deafer mortals in the dread of night.

Came war's grave summons which in sorrow he obeyed
Though alien war's brute passion to his gentler creed,
And faithful to his country in her hour of need—
His home forsaking and the briar-scented glade—
Out-striding fear laid down his life . . . .
Now as the red
Dawn breaks upon a world at war lament anew
For one whose sacrifice seems vain we living who
Watch eager youth pitched back where untold millions
bled!

E. CURT PETERS.

## *Wartime Love Song*
### *(To M.R.)*

The wind sings for you
the grass echoes his longing
in a million fluted rustles
a bladed symphony
unspoken prayers
native's supplication
to the merciless gods of war.

They tore the new-bound thread
and scattered their destruction
to the infinite ends of the earth
their blows brought blood from fusion.
They have torn you from me
and we undefended feel
our voices fall about us in boundless confusion
amorous phrases rebound broken
on an inanimate universe.

The winds that call for you
the skies that watch us with pity
the trees whose rustle of war
beseeches the gods unite us
all. These have no knowledge
that we can
discover ourselves in their voices
In the dead night's silence you are speaking
and from the mouth of the stars comes dropping my answer.

PETER BAKER.

## *Fir Trees*

Transient spires, so straight and hard and high,
That point like ageing fingers to the ageless Moon.
Each set by each; each crossed and turned and thrown
Black-shadowed on the dead ferns.

W. BARRINGTON PINK.

## *Song for Harpsichord*

How merrily the birds sing,
How trickily the flute,
Hey, hey, hey, when your love is fair,
How bitterly the hands wring,
How laggardly the foot
Hev. hev. hey, when your love is bare.

Merrily and trickily when your love is fair,
Bitterly and laggardly when your love is bare.

How tenderly the breeze sighs,
How blissfully the heart,
Hey, hey, hey, when your love is fair,
How woefully the gull cries,
How shadowy the chart.
Hey, hey, hey, when your love is bare.

Tenderly and blissfully when your love is fair,
Woefully and shadowy when your love is bare.

P. E. LEAVER.

## *False Lyric*

My love, on this wet afternoon,
While rain-sheets press the grass,
With you I'll play the wise buffoon
—For your amusement, lass.

And I shall pare away the time
With quips no malice fires,
And I shall make into a rhyme
The stabs of our desires.

Thus if boy fate should be unkind,
And wedge our love too soon,
A broken man some friend may find
On each wet afternoon.

ROBERT GREACEN.

## *Walking in the Park*

Now we will sit a while amid the peaceful morning
green;
Here, in this quietly breathing city park, where we
have been
An hour strolling now in June, among the growing
things.
Yes, let us sit upon this grass; and as a gentle shower
Receive the humble whisper of the several trees
Surrounding us. Recline, and pity here and there
pieces of some white flower

Decaying.

Living and decaying. But that is a story we know;
believing it
Brings us a certain comfort. Only, as you rest and
comb your hair,
Planning the lunch, can you believe that there is
anywhere
Between the beating veins, this war, this death and
life's retrieving
Power wracking us, will seem an alien, unexacting
thing?

BERTRAM WARR.

## *Nepthys*

Lady of failure and the mind's distress,
I sacrifice
The bitter resin of the moment's anguish
And alien laughter crusted into musk.

Corroded lips of an alembic drip
Into the vitreous phial of the brain;
Distill an ultimate—
the fissured instant;
Cosmic edges of a broken bowl

I scatter
Beads rime-wet from breath of the crevasse
Before thy feet, Lady of inviolate snows.

JOAN CHARLTON.

## *Dropping Asleep*

Weariness dropping asleep
To dream-sight is
Like a dark syrup
Falling into a deep
Jagged jar, filling it up:
So void without weariness
Is sleep;
So sweetly consoled by it.
Come away, spirit!
Leave body and brain
Immersed, inert
In that willing urn.
See beside them, beyond them see
Yggdrasil, that famous tree:

Its bare roots,
Bending branches,
Its dark bunches
Of purple, glowing, orange or clear fruits.
Climb it! Fix toe and curl finger
Into the gnarls of the bark, linger
Twig-high, but know too
Quick as a dapple of light how
To flicker down—
To be its blossom, its wide blossom and then
Its lowly moss and its hard lichen.

JOYCE CHADWICK.

## *Poem*

Yet in the actual moment itself
Man's instinctive predominant indecision
Makes a chaos of serenity,
The granted hour is passed
And Procrastination the thief once more.

How tiny is the hour,
Tinier than the sand which marks it—
Gone so soon,
So soon become history

MICHAEL INGHAM.

## *Dead Thoughts*

Shed as cadent foliage,
The fallen sift from autumn's frettea boughs.

Tremulous messages
Writ clear with green vitality
Until, with meaning twisted out,
Cast fitfully down and shed
As whimpering drifts of leaves into
The pools of cool, vegetal silence
And dead shade of chlorophyll.

Prolific mintage
Set in shimmering brilliancy
Until, soft fallen as the dew,
Stilled to a glistening sheen
Of amber flakes, gold twisted points,
Which, by oblivion dulled, remain
Forgotten lure of buried trove.

Chameleon fantasies
Which voiced with rapid, eager tongues
Until, from clamant echoing
Dismissed and whirled below
In hurried, whispering companies
To sink with sad adieu into
The dark morass of mouldering lies.

So myriad thoughts
Spring trembling to their pinnacles
—In towers of building cities,
Exulting minarets
And domes of adoration—
Until, high scaffold purpose,
Left abandoned as
The fragmentary evidence
Amid the weed and nettle of neglect
And dust and rubble of decay.

REGINALD AKHURST.

## *Windraw*

Environ Windraw, the decaying hill
white fluttering moths among soft falling shale
sons of the warmth, waning in emptiness: a well learn
beyond Windraw the unending dale:

this, the fivebladed forging grain
furrow and cornice of a fan
where the grey dust-driven azides freeze
shades of the ridge rake to the featheringstang
under that glaring night not found
the scattering crystal, the fantastic bond.

Trails towards Windraw an outrageous word
raised by green sharkfin, fin to the flying bird
mounted, five-Windraw, on the Mind Stone Edge.

This is no norm-throne that I should not dream
how the rent stain dark foilstreaks tear
how upon that wild fearful frame
hardens the blithe old reckoner's claw—

Then said the leader " In that land
ride me a chapel of coring-sand ":
I rode him his chapel night and day—
every buttress is flown away.

Cold coppery bent shakes on a dying hill
there is no burden but the white glazed yarns fulfil
there is no meaning or it fails in fear
how through the hard cloud the wild sun should
wear

Fire to the flesh
and marrow to the bone
many declaring
that which to many stands known

many declaring
ashes among sand
grasses of Windraw
there is no other land.

E. O. SMITH.

## *Petty Cury—War*

I dive in the aquarium
  When Saturday night unlocks the door
The catholic tanks are green and calm
  The surface infinitely far.

From roof and spire the grey weeds pour
  The grave fish sidle and embrace—
In every surreptitious door
  The feelers meet and phosphoresce . . .

At every globe the residents
  Spin upward gaping at the glow—
The small heads flicker in the dance,
  The white skulls crack beneath the toe.

The pike, the conscript and the tart
  And Aunty Polly from the West
In shoals of earnest faces float
  With numerous subaqueous haste:

Under the globe the hovering fry
  Devour the carcass of a bus—
The silent wrestle from the thighs
  In alleys deep and currentless . . . .

Transparent, mottled faces set
  On the dark tasks of having fun—
The adenoidal shoals that float
  Before the eyes of men who drown.

If but one sudden corpse would rush
  In bubbles downward as they pass
And make those zealous fishes bash
  For once their noses on the glass!

ALEX COMFORT.

## *Oxford—Wartime*

I must not think of high grey spires
Rising through the mist of Autumn night,
Must shun the love that pulses sweet delight,
Echos from the Cherwell: memory tires.
There was solitude beyond the fires
Of friendship. Never, never came the sight
Of desuetude. Madness, intellect, the height
For all to reach, and glory with the criers.

Magdalen, stately by the flow
Of water. Follow where the willow thins.
Reach the pot of ale. Walk the High
Where voices float as ghosts. Show
The city of a thousand joyful sins:
Gone are the quiet days. Must all then die?

ROSEMARY PEARSON.

## *Lines on the Death of a Cat*

It is so important that my grief be not absurd.
Some part of me is under earth with the cat:
The black-and-white, the common-looking cat—
(Children sob for dogs—dead aunts only frighten them)
This is the stammering sincerity of the humbled.

It is so important that you should not laugh—
Some life that loved me is sordidly ceased.
Me out of a world of betters this free warm thing
Sought me and me at every instant. Who now
Seeks so? None. I pray you—do not smile:
For oh it is so important that my grief be not absurd.

JOHN GALLEN.

# REVIEWS

## "SO BEAUTIFUL A WORLD."

"Those Springs of humane Nature are not so easily discover'd by every superficial Judge: It requires Philosophy as well as Poetry, to sound the depth of all the Passions; what they are in themselves, and how they are to be provok'd, and in this Science the best Poets have excell'd."

> This is a piece too fair
> To be the child of Chance, and not of Care.
> No Atoms casually together hurl'd
> Could e're produce so beautiful a world.
> Nor dare I such a doctrine here admit,
> As would destroy the providence of wit.

I think of this piece of prose criticism and verse from Dryden when I turn to review two books by the most significant poet of our time, T. S. Eliot. In *Points of View*, a selection of Eliot's critical writings, made by John Hayward, are representative passages, ranging from a single paragraph to a complete essay. The whole has been designed as an introduction to the author's work in prose, and well indeed it sustains its purpose.

Scholar, Philosopher and Poet, with a profound and brooding mind, everything that T. S. Eliot writes, agree with it or not, is of moment and weight. In his opinion, the end in view of the true critic, should be the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste, while his chief tools will be comparison and analysis.

From this point of view, the reading of such works as *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism? Elizabethan Essays*, or *Essays Ancient and Modern*, which contain the most fertile and penetrating of Mr. Eliot's prose, show how fully and sufficiently he lives up to his own critical criteria. *Points of View* is one of those seminal little books, which impel the reader, unless he is incurably lazy in mind, to examine his notions and compare his tastes, until he reaches a clearer and more balanced sense of values.

*The Dry Salvages* is a new long poem by T. S. Eliot. It is the third of a sequence of four, of which *Burnt Norton* and *East Coker* have already been published. The poem takes its title from a small group of rocks, with a beacon, off the north-east coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts. It is a poem in the grand manner, nobly conceived and carried through with great artistry, in which form and significance are blended into one:—

The river is within us, the sea is all about us;
The sea is the land's edge also, the granite
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses
Its hints of earlier and other creation: . . . .
It tosses up our losses, the torn seine,
The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar
And the gear of foreign dead men. The sea has many voices,
Many gods and many voices.

It is interesting to note how often in his poetry T. S. Eliot repeats both phrase and image. As Louis MacNeice has pointed out, not only is Eliot a master of the startling but inevitable image; he can also wed image and rhythm in such a way as to represent simultaneously in picture and sound the appropriate shade of meaning or mood. He has travelled a long way indeed from the arid manner of *The Waste Land,* to become the stylist of a continuing city, set on a hill.

*The Anthology of Modern Verse,* selected by the late Sir Algernon Methuen was published twenty years ago and has held its place as a best seller ever since. But twenty years is a long period in modern poetry. Other schools arise, new techniques are invented, and it became clear that a supplement to Sir Algernon's work was needed. He left off in 1920. It is at that point the two editors of *A New Anthology of Modern Verse* 1920-1940, take up the task of compilation. In an interesting and provocative dialogue between them by way of preface, they emphasize their agreements rather than their differences. They say that they prefer a poem to move them and secondly, that it should possess a precision of imagery, rather than a vague romantic profusion of it, and lastly, that the best test of every poem is that it gains from being read aloud. In short, passion, music, precision, are their touchstones. Readers may think that they often forget their own counsel.

In what way do the poets of to-day differ from the generation that preceded them? There is the experiment in technique and there is the social content, or more properly, propaganda. Some of the younger generation are attracted by surrealism and others, via Eliot, have studied the methods of the French Symbolists. With all this, what still remains is that these things matter only to the extent they impel the writing of good poetry. New methods, the attempt at originality or the fevent discipleship of a school, are merely tiresome, if the result is the writing of bad poetry. *A New Anthology* contains many good poems and some bad ones.

Of the former, Lascelles Abercrombie, Roy Campbell, W. H. Davies, T. S. Eliot, Oliver St. John Gogarty, A. E. Housman, Charles Madge, Ruth Pitter, Stephen Spender, W. B. Yeats, and Andrew Young, furnish examples. Of the latter W. H. Auden, George Barker, Thomas Hardy, T. Sturge Moore, Laura Riding, Humbert Wolfe, and others, provide more than enough. The choice from Robert Bridges and John Masefield is unhappy but on the whole, the editors have done their task well and have often made the best of a bad job. It is not their fault that many of their poets write bad verses.

Among the younger men Nicholas Moore is one of the most creative and vigorous of them all. His poetry in *A Wish in Season* often suggests more than it actually says. He possesses a reserve of strength, sign of a considerable talent and power of mind. His poems, unlike those of many of his contemporaries give pleasure as well as stimulation. There are more than a few writers today, clever young men composing verse, who are not, and never will be, poets, whereas one is always conscious that Nicholas Moore, in spite of occasional faults in emphasis and an overplus of "darlings" is a natural poet of much delight. Any reader who doubts this should read *Poem for This War-time, Epistle to G.S.F., Poems,* (For Priscilla) on pages 10 and 28 respectively and especially *Walking the Fields,* this latter a poem of moving and tragic intensity.

The trained, entertaining if sometimes rather too facile pen of Richard Church runs pleasantly on in *Eight for Immortality.* Here is a collection of papers on eight poets, W. H. Davies, Walter de la Mare, Robert Frost, the later Yeats, Edmund Blunden, Victoria Sackville West, T. S. Eliot and Robert Graves. They were written in the first place for insertion in the Fortnightly Review and admirably fulfill their purpose of giving pleasure combined with instruction to the general reader.

SAMUEL J. LOOKER.

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*Points of View, an anthology of Prose Passages from the writings of T. S. Eliot* (*Faber and Faber*) 3/6 *net.*

*The Dry Salvages by T. S. Eliot,* (*Faber and Faber*) 1/- *net.*

*A New Anthology of Modern Verse, edited by L. A. G. Strong and C. Day Lewis,* (*Methuen*) 6/- *net.*

*A Wish In Season, Poems by Nicholas Moore,* (*Fortune Press*) 4/6*d. net.*

*Eight For Immortality by Richard Church* (*Dent*) 6/- *net.*

## THE UNDERSIDE OF THE ICEBERG.

*The White Horseman Ed. by G. F. Hendry and Henry Treece. (Routledge 7/6d.)*

THE involuntary in Art has received so little care or attention in this country that a competent experiment in it would be welcome at any time. Most of us feel that surrealism alone, without a measure of conscious discipline to keep it in hand, is a retrogression into the limbo from which artistic form should arise. It has, on the whole, been too ready to sacrifice congruity and coherence to a mere flow of image, spontaneous but not fully human in that the consciousness of the artist asserted itself too little. One feels this very forcibly in the work of such English surrealists as Gascoyne.

And yet we recognise in the involuntary the sole store from which real poetry can be drawn. It is for this reason, that "The White Horseman" may well prove the most important literary landmark of the last twenty years. Its significance is at least equal to that of "Lyrical Ballads," and its competence in a new manner is very high.

The comparison is not overdrawn. The Apocalyptists aim at the founding of a new romanticism based on the universality of the myth. In technical skill and in their use of language they achieve a fluency and a beauty which breaks violently with the stylite classicism of the last ten years, and suggests that they may well produce "major" poetry in the sense in which the Victorians understood it,—if we want that: that is to say, poetry which is universal in scope, which is concerned with the interpretation of the fundamental legend of Man, and which is not dependent upon the existing zeitgeist for its permanence. The tradition of the legend in English literature goes back to Langland, Spenser and Milton, and latterly to Shelley's "Prometheus" and "Adonais." In every case the myth is approachable on several planes of meaning, and is presented through a narrative imagery. To a generation of poets confronted with the task of presenting universally the pathos of the individual, it offers an unbounded scope.

The school is unhomogenous, as it should be, and not all its adherents fall within the definitions of Fraser's very lucid preface. They include at least one poet of genius, whose reputation ought to be established by this book alone, and a number of considerable talent.

Treece's "Ballad of the Prince" is the fullest expression of the ideals of the school, and in technical competence and

stature it by far surpasses any work of the neo-classicists. It is the objective-statement of himself, corresponding to the subjective statement in "A Personal Armagaddon." It is his best poem so far: its frank romanticism and its lyrical imagery stand in the tradition of legend, and for the form Treece has returned to Spenser. The strength of the work is in its handling of word-play to further the idea's forward movement, a break with the crystallographic solids of "New Verse." The half-rhyme and word similarities all go to assist the imagery:

> "Through the cloak of twilight his hair's soft strands
> circle her hands like wished-for golden bonds
> that chain her to dead dreams for the rest of her years
> in a world where the word is more strong than the thing,
> where the thing is a thought in a dead man's head . ."

Sometimes, it reminds one of Shelley:—

"whose white limbs waver in the wind-like stream" or the two halcyons picking the berries. There is much in this poem of the myth which underlies all minds, and all the beliefs of the Golden Bough.

Of the other writers, Nicholas Moore is probably the best known. He interprets the personal and the individual with a clear, sensitive and often very moving style. Standing a little in the tradition of Blake he has a more certain comprehension of the symbol and the evocation of the word than the "Songs of Innocence,"

> "But world has worlds for adorning, words
> break on the shore of simples
> and here is the egg in a symbol
> capped with a hood of blood."

His greatest asset is an innocence and a sincerity very like Blake's. His love poems are probably his best work, because in the fulfilment of his own love he sees a perpetual mirror image of the tragedy of unfulfilment in these times. His work has progressed towards completness, ever since his last book. The influence of Treece and Moore alone, in this volume on English poetry should be far-reaching.

Much of the other work, in an attempt to follow Treece in richness of image, becomes turgid or overloaded. G. S. Fraser's poem on the drowned children of the *City of Benares* stands alone in its grave, restrained pity and precision of image. Vernon Watkins is more akin to the imagery of "Agamemnon's Tomb," or even, in his fascination with perfumes and stones, of Wilde. He suffers from having no

conception of what the myth which he is interpreting is—the person of Man tormented in Christ and Prometheus, perpetually and unwittingly crucified. J. F. Hendry is contemporary in his images, holding bombed ruins to his ear like shells, to hear the prophecy of bondage and downfall. By comparison with Treece's colours and lights his work is more photographic and less rhetorical. Tom Scott, closer to the New Writing school, contrives a fatalism rather reminiscent of Synge.

As with most honest romanticism, the prose attempts to convey the concept into another medium are unconvincing—Treece's prose is sometimes atrocious, because he cannot dissociate it from poetry, and it becomes turgid in the extreme. The fiction furthest removed from the poetic tenets of the school is the most effective—Fraser's "Incident in a War," which is one of the best short stories for many years, and Hendry's excellent study of boyhood. Nicholas Moore's prose surrealism is tiresome at best. It is in the nature of prose that while its meaning can be comprehended in many planes, the individual image cannot, and requires to be unambiguous, or the result becomes undisciplined poetry, and not prose at all. Both Melville's and Fraser's critical essays are well written and quite new to the interpretation of involuntarism and automatism in art. They make a bridge between the underlying philosophy and the achievement of the form.

So little significant work has appeared since Eliot's collected poems that it is with a new hope that one can turn to this collection and realise that not only is a greater than Eliot here, but that there is a fair chance of a revitalisation of literature beginning, expounded by poets who have returned to the concept of a prophetic myth as an end in itself.

ALEX COMFORT.

## PETER PAN AMONG THE RED TURTLES.

In his introduction to I, GERONTIUS, by Paul Scott, Clive Sansom tells us that it is a poem 'that wanders on the hinterland of consciousness without actually stepping over into the surreal.' Mr. Scott's style is derived from the Bible and T. S. Eliot but he never attains the level of his models, although here and there a flash of poetry can be discovered among the rolling dark clouds of turgidity such as

> the emptyness and the lamplight
> and the worn cat in the corner

but it is surely difficult to write a long poem without a line of poetry here and there creeping in somewhere. It is cast into three parts and in the third the author has attempted to make effective use of a repetition of words and phrases as in an echo which perhaps as Mr. Sansom claims 'when the poem is read aloud with imaginative sympathy . . . . it is intensly moving. For our part we think this is very much the worst broadsheet in an otherwise interesting series.

The author of *The Song of a Red Turtle* by George Scurfield will be known by some as the founder of Cambridge Front. There is a cleverness and brightness of phrasing that makes these poems come alive on the page although when they do so they are generally found to resemble some strange and comic inhabitant of the aquarium. Sometimes as in *The Turtle Stops To Think* a good beginning is marred by a weak ending 'I shall fall off my tile' or one might have thought that the 'hopeful, sensuous Kay' would have been something more soul stirring than 'The apple of my eye.' Nearly all Mr. Scurfield's last lines are weak and bathetic. *The Dear Green* is the most successful poem in this collection, perhaps the only one. But one swallow is at least a promise of summer.

Long poems seem to be no longer rare. Mr. John Waller, gives us *The Confessions of Peter Pan.* Young poets seem to have the art of choosing unprepossessing titles which only those whose duty it is, such as the conscientious reviewer or the long suffering friend, are ever disposed to by-pass. Mr. Waller should have written his confessions in prose. Poetry is something less than confession—and something more.

We welcome MANUSCRIPT, a new magazine the first two numbers of which we have received. The twentyfour year old editor C. P. Billot is a librarian now in the army and does his editing in his spare time. There is an interesting article on Georges Braque by one of our contributors Eric Nixon. The second number certainly improves on the first, and so we wish MANUSCRIPT luck and better and better issues.

WREY GARDINER.

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*I, Gerontius, Paul Scott, Resurgam Younger Poets No. 5. Favil Press* 1/-.

*Song of a Red Turtle, George Scurfield, PL Pamphlets* 1/-. *Confessions of Peter Pan, John Waller, Kingdom Come,* 175 *Banbury Road, Oxford.*

*Manuscript, Bi-monthly,* 7 *Conifer Road, Maybush, Southampton.*